



[Contact name]

18 September 2020

[Party name]

By email: [email address]

Dear ...

ACT election 2020—[Party’s] views on key animal protection issues

The Animal Defenders Office is seeking your Party’s views on key issues relating to animal protection. We consider the issues to be major animal welfare issues that an incoming government will face over the next four years in the ACT.

We are contacting all political parties about these issues, so we can inform the public about where each party stands.

To gauge each party’s views on these issues we have prepared six questions which are set out below. We hope you will be able to provide a response to each question on your party’s behalf.

We know you are very busy so we would be happy to receive a ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘undecided’ response.

1. 1080 poison

1080 (sodium fluoroacetate) is a highly toxic poison used on vertebrate species in Australia. The toxin is known to kill native species and companion animals (as pictured), both from direct and secondary ingestion. According to the RSPCA, ‘available evidence on the effect of 1080 on affected species indicates that it is not a humane poison’.¹ It is classed by the World Health Organisation as an Extremely Hazardous pesticide (Class 1a WHO).² The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations recommends ending its use.³



Question 1: Would your party support phasing out 1080 as an animal poison in the ACT?

Yes No Undecided

2. Prong collars for dogs

Prong collars are used as a form of negative reinforcement in behavioural training for dogs. The collar features a series of fang-shaped metal links, or prongs, that are orientated inwards. When the collar is tightened, the prongs dig into the dog’s neck. They are opposed by RSPCA Australia⁴ and are banned in Victoria due to animal welfare concerns.⁵



Question 2: Would your party support a ban on prong collars in the ACT?

Yes No Undecided

¹ RSPCA Australia, 1 May 2019, <https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-is-the-rspcas-view-on-using-1080-for-pest-animal-control/>.

² World Health Organisation (WHO), ‘The WHO Recommended Classification of Pesticides by Hazard’ (2019) https://www.who.int/ipcs/publications/pesticides_hazard/en/.

³ The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), ‘International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management. Guidelines on Highly Hazardous Pesticides’ (2016), <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5566e.pdf>.

⁴ RSPCA Australia (2019), <https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/are-prong-collars-harmful-to-my-dog/>.

⁵ *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2019* (Vic), regulation 11.

3. Mulesing

Mulesing is a controversial procedure performed on lambs in the agricultural industry. It involves slicing the flesh from around the buttocks of lambs so that the skin can form a smooth layer to prevent flystrike. It is usually done without any pain relief or anaesthetics. There are alternatives that are readily available. Major animal protection groups in Australia oppose mulesing on animal welfare grounds.⁶



In Victoria a law commenced in July 2020 making it a criminal offence to mules a sheep without using pain relief.⁷ A bill to ban the practice as a whole has been introduced into the New South Wales Parliament.⁸

Question 3: Would your party support a ban on mulesing in the ACT?

Yes No Undecided

4. Kangaroo killing on public land

For several years the ACT Government has killed thousands of healthy kangaroos in ACT nature reserves and on other public land. In *Animal Liberation ACT v Conservator of Flora and Fauna*⁹ it was established that these kills have serious negative animal welfare outcomes, particularly for the hundreds of orphaned joeys who die a slow death after being separated from their mother (and primary source of food).



Question 4: Would your party support a moratorium on killing kangaroos on public land while the need for the kills in conservation terms is evaluated and non-lethal measures explored?

Yes No Undecided

5. Fruit tree netting—a death trap for native flying foxes

Each year in the ACT native flying foxes get caught in poorly designed and badly hung fruit tree netting. The netting has holes large enough for animals to get caught and become entangled. This kind of netting is readily available for sale in the ACT. Flying foxes can be entangled for days before being freed by volunteer wildlife carers. A significant proportion of the rescued animals die from injuries sustained during their ordeal. The Grey-headed Flying-fox is listed as Vulnerable in the ACT. The *Nature Conservation (Grey-headed Flying-fox) Conservation Advice 2019* (ACT) states that the main threat to these animals in the ACT is ‘entrapment in fine gauge netting loosely draped over backyard fruit trees.’¹⁰



Victoria has introduced a new law that will make it an offence to use or sell fruit netting that does not comply with the stipulated mesh size.¹¹

Question 5: Would your party support amending ACT law to limit the type of fruit-tree netting that can be sold or used, to help protect flying foxes and other native animals?

Yes No Undecided

⁶ See RSPCA Australia, <https://tinyurl.com/y3uux5se>; and *Towards a Non-Mulesed Future*, BG Economics (commissioned by HSI Australia and Four Paws Australia), July 2020: <https://tinyurl.com/y2drvryb>.

⁷ *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2019* (Vic), reg 8(2).

⁸ *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Restrictions on Stock Animal Procedures) Bill 2019* (NSW), <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/bills/Pages/bill-details.aspx?pk=3683>.

⁹ [2014] ACAT 35.

¹⁰ *Nature Conservation (Grey-headed Flying-fox) Conservation Advice 2019* (ACT), page 5.

¹¹ *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2019* (Vic) reg 13 (to commence on 1 September 2021).

6. Shark fin trade

'Shark finning' involves cutting off a shark's fins while the animal is still alive and throwing the shark back into the water where they die a slow and painful death. The practice is driven by demand for shark fin soup. Some shark populations have declined by more than 90% from the shark fin soup trade alone.¹² Every year 73 million sharks are killed just for their fins.¹³ Shark fins are imported into Australia from countries with little or no live shark finning regulatory controls.



In 2019 Canada enacted a ban on the import and export of shark fins.¹⁴ A bill to ban the import, export, and sale of shark fins in the State of Florida, the United States' largest importer of shark fin, has passed both Houses and in September 2020 was presented to the Governor to sign into law.¹⁵

In Australia, bills have been introduced into NSW and WA to prohibit the sale of any shark fin product and derivative.¹⁶ In the ACT, there are currently at least three restaurants that offer shark fin soup at their venues.

Question 6: Would your party support a legislative ban on shark fin products in the ACT?

Yes No Undecided

We would greatly appreciate receiving your responses by **COB 25 September 2020**.

If you would like further information about any of the issues raised above, please let me know.

Warm regards

Tara Ward

Executive Director | Animal Defenders Office Inc.
GPO Box 2259, Canberra ACT 2601 | 0428 416 857
tara@ado.org.au | contact@ado.org.au | www.ado.org.au

About the Animal Defenders Office Inc.

The Animal Defenders Office (ADO) is a nationally accredited community legal centre based in Canberra. We specialise in public interest animal law. We aim to support, empower and advocate for individuals and groups who want to use the law to protect animals, and to do this through the provision of information, advocacy and advice. If you have a query about anything in this letter, please email us: contact@ado.org.au. To learn more about the ADO please visit our website: www.ado.org.au

¹² Yvonne Sadovy de Mitchenson et al, 'Out of control means off the menu: The case for ceasing consumption of luxury products from highly vulnerable species when international trade cannot be adequately controlled; shark fin as a case study', (2018) 98 *Marine Policy* 115.

¹³ Boris Worm et al, 'Global Catches, Exploitation Rates, and Rebuilding Options for Sharks and Rays', (2013) 40 *Marine Policy* 194. One quarter of the world's shark species is threatened with extinction: Nicholas K Dulvy et al, 'Extinction Risk and Conservation of the World's Sharks and Rays', (2014) 3 *eLife* 1.

¹⁴ Amendments to the *Fisheries Act* (C-68, Canada), assented to 21 June 2019; <https://www.parl.ca/LegisInfo/BillDetails.aspx?Language=E&billId=9630814&View=4>

¹⁵ The law will be the *Kristin Jacobs Ocean Conservation Act 2020*, 'SB 680 Shark fins' <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2020/680/?Tab=BillText>. The US House of Representatives has passed the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Bill 2019 (U.S) <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/737>.

¹⁶ Food Amendment (Shark Fin Prohibition) Bill 2015 (NSW); Food Amendment (Shark Fin Prohibition) Bill 2019 (WA).